



PROFILE

# Makers in the USA

A trio of design studios forms a distinctly American picture of modern design: Despite their regional differences, all three produce forward-thinking products and furniture made using time-tested craft and fabrication methods.

Portraits by Nathaniel Wood

When Michael James Moran begins a new piece of furniture in his Charleston, South Carolina, wood shop and studio, he often begins with one plank that he imbues with a singular purpose: One board must be a cabinet, another a coffee table. "I try to take what already exists in the wood's inherent beauty and make it into a functional piece," he says. This intuitive, organic process yields furniture that pays homage to its arboreal origins, rather than obscuring them. With the help of his partner, Celia Gibson, Moran's approach has earned him a rapidly expanding group of clients: homeowners, interior designers, and galleries around the country.

Moran's output is impressive considering the meticulous care with which he makes a piece of furniture. For a typical custom piece, he first salvages a fallen tree, then takes it to a local mill, cures the planks on-site, builds the furniture, and, anywhere from four to 18 months later, will even help his clients install the finished product. "Every design has both of our eyes and hands on it, from start to finish," says Gibson. Their latest venture, however, goes in a different direction: Small-batch editions—in which one tree is used for a run of roughly twenty pieces, all in the same prescribed design—means they're able to reach a broader audience, more efficiently.

[moranwoodworked.com](http://moranwoodworked.com)



"When you touch a finished piece, I don't want it to feel like glass or plastic, I want it to feel like wood."

—MICHAEL JAMES MORAN

SOUTHEAST

## Moran Woodworked Furniture



Michael James Moran and Celia Gibson demonstrate *shou-sugi-ban*, a Japanese wood burning technique (top). The Charred Ladder Leg cabinet

(above) was built from blackened Charleston loblolly pine with a dramatic texture. The Editions Tea table (left) is finished with a raw-edge detail.